D.E.DRAFT
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The undersigned, staff members of the RAND Corp., have for years been engaged in research on Vietnam and related policy matters. ~~for the U.S. Government.~~ Our conclusions ~~on current policy~~ expressed below necessarily reflect both professional and personal judgments.

We believe that the U.S. Government should decide now to liquidate American participation in the Vietnam War, beginning at once, completing within one year at the most. Total U.S. disengagement should not be conditioned upon agreement or performance -- i.e., should not be subject to veto -- by either Hanoi or Saigon.

It is our view that, apart from persuasive, moral and legal arguments that could lead to that conclusion, there are four objections to continued U.S. efforts in the war:

1. Enemy forces cannot be militarily defeated (short of totally destroying the country) -- as is now widely acknowledged -- but neither can the opposing leadership be coerced by present (or any other) strategy into making significant political concessions;
2. U.S. past undertakings to the Vietnamese people are not now served by prolonging our combat participation in Vietnam -- with ~~the U.S.~~ firepower ~~that entails~~ -- on demand of the Saigon Government, whose capacity to survive on its own must finally be tested ~~and whatever~~ regardless of outcome ~~accepted~~;
3. The ~~consequences and~~ importance to the U.S. national interest of the future political complexion of South Vietnam, ~~while uncertain (not only to us), have~~ has been greatly exaggerated, as has the negative international impact of a U.S. military

withdrawal from Vietnam;

4. Most importantly, the human, political and material costs of continuing our part in the war far outweigh any prospects of benefit, and are ~~worse~~ greater than the foreseeable costs and risks of disengagement .

Our studies of enemy morale, leadership, and performance all point to his continuing resiliency and effectiveness, even under extremely adverse conditions: in part because of his genuine conviction that he fights for a just and vital cause. Estimates that the opponent (in North or South Vietnam) is weakening because of internal strains and military pressures are, in our view, erroneous~~, and grossly overoptimistic.~~ As to settlement, the opposing leadership is extremely unlikely to concede the authority, even until elections, of the present Saigon Government, or, with that government in place, to accept a ceasefire or to withdraw all Northern troops. Neither military improvement in Vietnam, nor a great reduction in U.S. costs and dissent -- none of which we think likely -- would hold any promise of inducing such concessions. Thus to make total U.S. disengagement contingent upon such agreement is to perpetuate ~~it~~ US presence indefinitely.

But the same is true if we await significant concessions ~~(or sharp improvement, or voluntary "broadening")~~ by the Saigon regime. ~~One~~ necessary condition for an agreed ceasefire or provisional settlement is a government in Saigon willing to negotiate an end to hostilities; yet the interests of the present leadership in perpetuating its status and power are ~~best~~ served not by settlement but only by prolongation of the war and of American ~~wartime~~ presence and support. ~~Thus, their~~ Their interests are ~~now~~ the

directly opposed to ours, and to those of the majority of the Vietnamese people: most of whom, ~~we believe,~~ would by now probably prefer almost any conceivable political arrangement to the continuation of this war, and specifically to the continued ~~burden~~ use of U.S. firepower in their midst. The demands of this regime cannot compel or even justify our prolonging our participation in this conflict.

A provisional government in Saigon willing seriously to negotiate a ceasefire with the NLF, and acceptable to the NLF in such negotiations, would probably be preferred to the present GVN by the majority of Vietnamese. Such a change in composition and policy (which might come about at last, when a U.S. withdrawal begins in earnest) would be in the interests of the U.S., which should certainly not obstruct it by unconditional support of the present regime. Yet we believe the U.S. should not compromise the primary goal of disengagement by actively involving itself further in Vietnamese politics -- ~~maladroit~~ such efforts in the past having only increased our sense of responsibility for an outcome we cannot ~~truly~~ control -- or by making our extrication in any way contingent upon such developments.

As for global U.S. interests, the original rationale of a large-scale ~~scale of the~~ Vietnam effort ~~could only be justified by objectives that~~ has long since been discredited: the prevention of proxy victories by the USSR or Communist China. Moreover, ~~with respect to the "domino principle,"~~ we regard the Vietnamese ~~Communist~~ revolution as having special characteristics that cannot be considered typical of or exerting decisive influence on other revolutionary movements in Asia or elsewhere. ~~As Southeast Asian governments generally agree, the fate of rebellions is determined by the unique conditions~~

in each country, and hence the prevention of other Vietnams depends essentially on their own efforts, which may even be spurred by U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam. We do not predict only fortunate consequences in Southeast Asia or South Vietnam (or the U.S.) after our withdrawal. What we do say is that ~~whatever~~ the risks ~~must be run~~ will not be less after another year or more of continued American involvement, ~~and that we should not be staving off~~ in any case, it is wrong to try to postpone the possible bad consequences ~~of the sort threatened at the price of adding to~~ by prolonging the human costs ~~of this war.~~ of our combat involvement.

What should disengagement entail? Briefly, it should have an explicit timetable of between six months and a year at most for total withdrawal of American military personnel, beginning immediately. It should not be tied to any circumstances or conditions, either with respect to the course of the fighting, progress in "Vietnamization," or developments in Paris. It would categorically end the U.S. military presence and involvement, with or without a negotiated agreement. So doing, it would forestall the grave, unknowable risks to which still more failures of strategy might lead, quite apart from the increasing difficulty of extricating ourselves from an open-ended commitment pursued further into a new Administration. And it would make clear that if a lasting settlement of the war is ever to be achieved, the elements of it must be determined -- and the responsibility for it assumed -- by the contending Vietnamese factions themselves.